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Preface of the special issue “Multidisciplinary reconstructions in palaeoecology—the diversity of ways and means”

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It is a real pleasure to dedicate this special issue of *Vegetation History and Archaeobotany* to Professor Brigitta Ammann. At this stage in her career we take the opportunity to pay tribute to her for her contribution to palaeoecology, environmental history and climate change research. For more than a quarter of a century Brigitta has been a central figure leading research teams, linking people in multi- and interdisciplinary research projects and supporting colleagues, especially those from eastern Europe. As a former student of Professor Max Welten, she has taken up his legacy and built on the strong basis of his pioneer work. She has always approached her research with an open mind, being quick to pick out the key questions within the vast range of palaeoecological problems, to include new ideas and methods and generously give opportunities to young researchers. She has provided a stimulating working environment to which many of the articles in this volume bear evidence.

Coming from a mountainous country it is no wonder that tree-lines have fascinated her. Not only the cold altitudinal tree-lines which form one of the most conspicuous features of the Alps in her native country but also the

dry tree-line, the search for which has taken her further and further east and brought her in contact with more and more researchers whom she has gathered into her group. It is no surprise, therefore, that tree lines and their differing positions through the Holocene form the subject of several of the dedicated contributions to this special issue.

Together the 17 articles presented reflect the vast diversity of Brigitta's research interests: the Late-glacial/Holocene transition, fire history, chronology, pollen monitoring, isotopes, vegetation dynamics, the impact of humans on their environment, links between climate change and land use and the importance of spatial and temporal resolution. The overriding aim, however, has been to focus on something which she has constantly championed – the multidisciplinary approach to reconstructing past environments. Throughout her research work the biotic response to natural and anthropogenic environmental change has played a central role. The use of many independent lines of evidence and the linking of ecology with palaeoecology by means of high-resolution studies particularly characterizes Brigitta's holistic approach. The present collection of studies is but a mere reflection of the admiration that her students, colleagues and friends foster for her as a remarkable scientist and not least as an open-minded and generous human being.

Although these papers manage to encompass many time windows from the Quaternary at a whole range of spatial scales, and provide data from different geographical areas, because of time and space restrictions, they represent contributions from only a fraction of the wide community of researchers with whom she has interacted. We are quite sure, however, that all friends and colleagues add their congratulations and best wishes to her as she enters this new stage in her life.

We would like to thank all the colleagues who have helped us assemble this Festschrift by providing contributions, reviewing the articles and putting it into its present form.

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